

REMARKS

Upon entry of the present amendment, claim 10 will be amended, claims 12-19 will be cancelled, and claims 20-24 will be newly added. Applicants respectfully request entry of the present amendment, and reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections together with an indication of the allowability of all of the claims in the present application, in due course.

As an initial matter, Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for allowing claims 5-11.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 12, 14-16, 18 and 19 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Roberts et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,949,560) in view of Ooi et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,829,440) and Ishikawa et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,081,360), and rejected claims 13 and 17 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Roberts et al. in view of Ooi et al. and Ishikawa et al. and further in view of Taga et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,872,647).

Upon entry of the present amendment, Applicants will have cancelled claims 12-19 merely to advance issuance of an allowance, and without conceding the propriety of the rejections.

Upon entry of the present amendment, allowed dependent claim 10 will be placed in independent form, and claims 20-24, which depend from claim 10, will be newly added. As claims 20-24 correspond to previously existing claims 6-9 and 11, Applicants respectfully submit that the addition of claims 20-24 do not raise new issues requiring further search and/or consideration by the Examiner.

Based on the above, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Applicants recognize that the current status of the present application is after-Final. However, Applicants respectfully submit that entry of the present amendment is proper under the current circumstances, as the present amendment does not raise new issues requiring further search and/or consideration.

Applicants believe that the present application is in condition for allowance, and respectfully request an indication to that effect. Applicants have amended the claims and argued their allowability. Accordingly, reconsideration of the outstanding Final Official Action and allowance of the present application and all the recited claims therein are respectfully requested and now believed to be appropriate.

Any amendments to the claims made in this amendment, which have not been made to overcome the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability. Accordingly, no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should an extension of time be necessary to maintain the pendency of this application, including any extensions of time required to place the application in condition for allowance by an Examiner's Amendment, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fee to Deposit Account No. 19-0089.

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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